



Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit

Making your recruitment accessible for individuals with disabilities and additional needs.

Why accessibility in recruitment matters.

Accessible recruitment is about ensuring that everyone, regardless of disability or additional needs, has a fair opportunity to apply for and succeed in a role.

Many talented individuals are excluded not because they lack skills, but because recruitment processes are not designed with accessibility in mind.



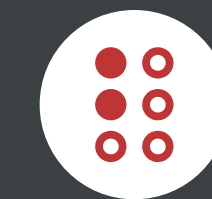
Common barriers include:

- Inaccessible job adverts or application systems
- Lack of clarity or overly complex language
- Limited flexibility in interviews or assessments
- Not knowing how to request adjustments



Who this toolkit is for:

- Hiring managers
- HR teams
- Small organisations and charities



Led by lived experience:

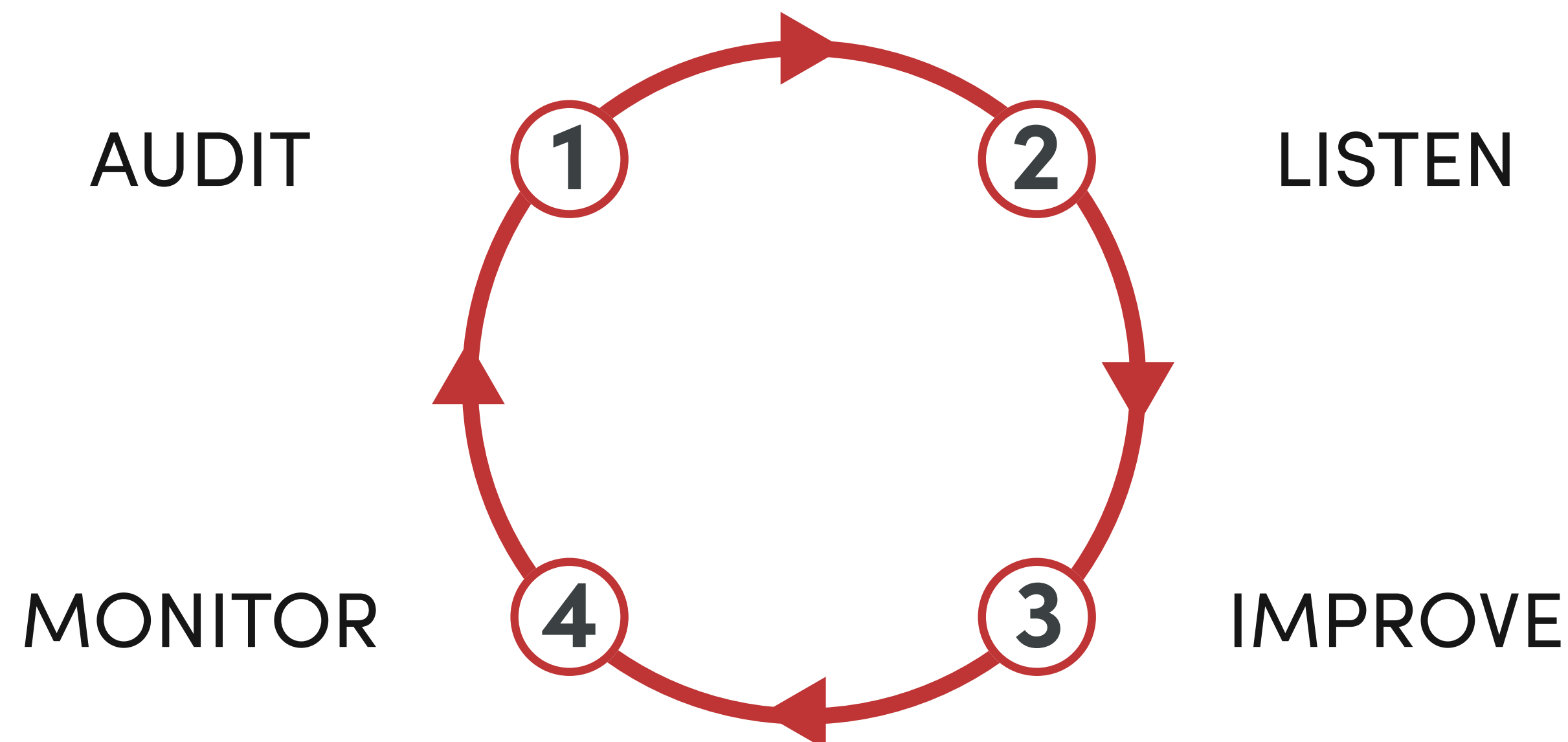
This toolkit is informed by lived experience of sight loss, alongside the best practice in inclusive recruitment.



How to use this toolkit.

You can use this toolkit to:

- Review your current recruitment process
- Identify quick, practical improvements
- Create a more inclusive candidate experience
- Build confidence in accessible hiring



What does accessible recruitment mean?

Accessible recruitment means designing your hiring process so that it can be used and understood by as many people as possible.

It includes:

- Providing information in clear, simple language
- Offering materials in alternative formats
- Allowing flexibility in how candidates apply and interview
- Proactively offering adjustments

Myth busting:

“Accessibility is expensive”

Many changes, such as clearer wording or flexible formats, cost nothing.

“Accessibility is only for disabled people”

Accessible recruitment improves the experience for all candidates.

Myth

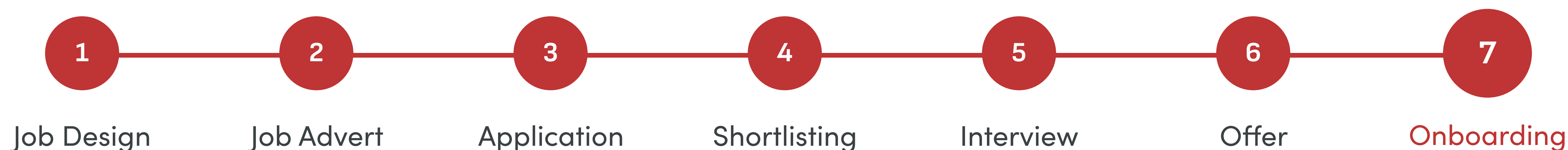
- ✗ Accessibility is expensive
- ✗ Only helps disabled people
- ✗ We don't get disabled applicants
- ✗ Adjustments give an advantage
- ✗ It takes too much time
- ✗ We'll act if someone asks
- ✗ Our process works fine
- ✗ It lowers standards
- ✗ We lack expertise
- ✗ It's only about physical needs

Reality

- ✓ Many changes are free
- ✓ Helps everyone
- ✓ Barriers are stopping applicants
- ✓ They create fairness
- ✓ Many changes are quick to make
- ✓ Proactive is more inclusive
- ✓ It may still exclude people
- ✓ It supports fair assessment
- ✓ Small steps make a difference
- ✓ It includes many different needs

The recruitment journey.

Accessible recruitment is not one step – it's the entire journey. Barriers can appear at any stage, from the job advert to onboarding.



Writing inclusive job adverts.

Your job advert is often the first impression of your organisation. If its unclear or inaccessible, you may unintentionally exclude talented candidates before they even apply.

Accessible job adverts help people quickly understand the role and feel confident applying.



①

Use clear language

Avoid jargon, acronyms, or overly complex language.

Instead of: “Stakeholder engagement and cross-functional collaboration required.”

Say: “Working with different teams and partners.”

②

Be clear about what matters

Focus on essential skills, not a long list of “nice to haves”.

- Avoid unnecessary requirements
- Separate essential vs desirable criteria
- Be realistic about experience levels

③

Be transparent

Clarity builds trust and helps candidates decide if the role is right for them.

Include:

- Salary (or salary range)
- Working pattern (full-time, part-time, flexible)
- Location (remote, hybrid, office-based)

④

Use inclusive language

Avoid wording that may unintentionally exclude.

- Avoid gendered language (e.g. salesman)
- Avoid overly corporate or intimidating tone
- Keep the tone welcoming and human

⑤

Highlight flexibility

Flexibility can make a role accessible to more people.

Examples:

- Flexible hours
- Remote or hybrid working
- Job share options

⑥

Add accessibility statements

Make it clear that adjustments are welcomed and explain how to request them.

Your accessibility statement provides valuable insight into how you treat those with additional support requirements.

Avoid early role closures.

Closing a role early can disadvantage candidates.

Some individuals may:

- Use assistive technology, which can take longer
- Need support to complete applications
- Require information in alternative formats



Good practice:

- Keep roles open until the stated deadline
- Be clear about timelines
- Avoid “rolling” deadlines where possible

A simple line you can include in upcoming job adverts:

“We will review applications after the closing date to ensure all candidates have a fair opportunity to apply.”

Accessible job advert checklist:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Written in plain English | ☐ Inclusive, welcoming tone is used |
| ☐ Avoids jargon and acronyms | ☐ No gendered or biased language |
| ☐ Uses short sentences and clear structure | ☐ Key responsibilities are easy to understand |
| ☐ Essential vs desirable criteria clearly separated | ☐ Formatting is clear |
| ☐ Requirements are realistic and necessary | ☐ Text is accessible (screen-reader friendly) |
| ☐ Salary or salary range is included | ☐ Accessibility statement is included |
| ☐ Working pattern is clearly stated | ☐ Contact details for adjustments are provided |
| ☐ Location is clear | ☐ Role will not close before advertised deadline |
| ☐ Flexible working options are mentioned | ☐ Application timeline allows sufficient time |

Creating an accessible application process.

A rigid or overly complex application process can unintentionally exclude candidates. Small changes make a big difference.

01

Offer flexibility

- Allow a CV or application
- Accept alternative formats (audio, video, written)
- Provide a contact option for support

02

Make forms accessible

- Works with screen readers
- Can be completed using a keyboard
- Clearly labelled fields, no colour-only cues

03

Avoid time pressure

- Avoid strict timed applications
- Let candidates save progress and return
- Be clear about deadlines

04

Keep it simple and clear

- Break forms into clear sections
- Use plain English throughout
- Avoid repeated or unnecessary questions

05

Be clear about support

- What adjustments are available
- How to request them
- Who to contact

Accessible application process checklist:

- ☐ **Quick Win** Candidates can apply using a CV or application form
- ☐ Alternative formats are accepted (audio, video)
- ☐ **Quick Win** A contact option is provided for support
- ☐ Online forms work with screen readers
- ☐ Forms can be completed using a keyboard
- ☐ Fields are clearly labelled
- ☐ Instructions are clear and in plain English
- ☐ The process is broken into manageable sections
- ☐ Candidates can save and return to the application
- ☐ **Quick Win** No unnecessary time limits are used
- ☐ Deadlines are clearly communicated
- ☐ Contact details for adjustments are easy to find

Accessible communication with candidates.

Clear, consistent communication helps candidates feel confident and supported throughout the recruitment process. For many people, unclear or last-minute communication can create unnecessary stress and barriers. Accessible communication is often simple – but makes a significant difference.



Provide clear instructions

Good practice:

Make sure candidates understand:

- What they need to do
- What to expect next
- Key dates and deadlines

Keep language simple and direct.



Offer communication preferences

Not everyone communicates in the same way.

Good practice:

- Offer options such as email, phone, or video
- Ask candidates for their preferred method
- Respect their choice

Accessible communication with candidates (continued).



Share information in advance

Providing information early helps candidates prepare.

This might include:

- Interview date, time, and format
- Who they will meet
- What the interview will involve
- Any tasks or assessments



Avoid last minute changes

Sudden changes can create barriers and increase anxiety.

Where possible:

- Stick to agreed times
- Give as much notice as possible
- Clearly explain any changes



Use accessible formats

Ensure your communication works for everyone.

Consider:

- Clear email formatting (short paragraphs, bullet points)
- Avoiding attachments that may not be accessible
- Offering alternative formats on request

Fair and inclusive shortlisting.

Shortlisting is a key decision-making stage in recruitment. Without clear processes, unconscious bias can influence who progresses, often without us realising. Taking a structured and consistent approach helps ensure candidates are assessed fairly based on their skills and potential.

Reduce bias by:

Using structured scoring criteria – create a clear framework to assess all candidates against the same criteria. This helps ensure consistency and reduces subjective decision-making.

Assessing skills, not assumptions – focus on what the candidate can do, not how their experience looks on paper.

- Avoid making assumptions based on background
- Consider transferable skills
- Look beyond traditional career paths
- Avoiding judgement about gaps in employment
 - Gaps in CVs can happen for many reasons, including health conditions, caring responsibilities and education
- Focus on skills and experience rather than timelines
- Make sure all candidates are assessed in the same way
 - Use the same criteria for everyone
 - Avoid informal or ‘gut feeling’ decisions
 - Document your decisions where possible

Accessible interviews.

Interviews can be one of the biggest barriers in recruitment. They often rely on specific formats, time pressure, and communication styles that may not reflect a candidate's true ability. Making interviews accessible as possible helps create a fairer experience and allows candidates to perform at their best. **Make interviews accessible by offering adjustments upfront – don't wait for candidates to ask.**

✓ Good practice:

- Clearly state that adjustments are available
- Explain how to request them
- Ask candidates what they need

This creates a more open and supportive experience

✓ Share in advance:

- Interview format (online, in-person, panel)
- Names and roles of interviewers
- How long it will last
- Any tasks or assessments

Providing questions in advance (where possible) – this can significantly improve accessibility for many candidates. It helps those who process information differently, experience anxiety, and/or use assistive technology. Even sharing themes and topics can help.

Consider alternative formats, such as remote or in-person options, if needed. Additional time can also remove pressure which can disadvantage some candidates.

- ✓ Allow additional time for responses
- ✓ Build in pauses & avoid rushing candidates



Examples of interview adjustments.

Adjustment:	What it might look like:
Screen reader compatible tasks	Providing materials in accessible digital formats
Extra time	Allowing longer responses or extended interview slots
Breaks	Offering short breaks during longer interviews
Support person	Allowing a candidate to attend with support
Alternative formats	Written responses instead of verbal answers
Remote option	Offering video or phone interviews

Example: clear and accessible interview invite:

- ✗ Instead of – “interview details to follow”.
- ✓ Use – “Your interview will take place on [date] at [time] via Zoom (or other option). You will meet with two members of our team and the interview will last around 45 minutes. If you require any adjustments, such as extra time or a different format, please let us know”.

Accessible assessment tasks.

Assessment tasks should measure a candidate's skills and suitability for the role – not create unnecessary barriers. Poorly designed tasks can disadvantage candidates and may not accurately reflect their ability. Accessible tasks allow candidates to demonstrate what they can do in a fair and supportive way.

✓ Good practice:

- Give clear instructions – unclear or overly complex instructions can create confusion.
- Make sure:
 - The task purpose is clearly explained
 - Instructions are simple and easy to follow
 - Expectations and outcomes are clear
- Allow flexible timing – time pressure can be a significant barrier.

Some candidates may:

- Use assistive technology
- Need breaks
- Process information differently

✓ Good practice:

- Offer flexible deadlines where possible
- Allow extra time if needed
- Be transparent about how long the task should take
- Provide accessible formats – tasks should be accessible to all candidates
- Consider:
 - Providing documents in accessible formats
 - Ensuring compatibility with screen readers
 - Avoiding overly visual-only tasks without alternatives
- Keep tasks relevant and proportionate – avoid tasks that are longer or more complex than necessary
- Focus on what is essential to the role
- Avoid “test everything” approaches
- Offer alternative ways to complete tasks
- Be open to adjustments

Offers and onboarding.

Accessibility doesn't stop once a candidate is offered a role. A supportive and accessible onboarding process helps new starters feel confident, prepared, and able to succeed from day one. Continue good practice by asking about adjustments early – don't wait until someone starts struggling.

01

Good practice:

- Ask about adjustments as part of the offer stage
- Make it clear this is a normal and supported process
- Keep the conversation open and ongoing

02

Make it accessible:

- Use clear, simple language
- Provide documents in accessible formats
- Avoid scanned PDFs or image based text

03

Check that:

- Internal systems work with assistive technology
- Login processes are accessible
- Key tools are useable from the beginning

04

Provide:

- First day expectations
- Schedule or timetable
- Key contacts
- What they need to bring or prepare

05

Consider:

- Checking in regularly
- Giving time to settle in
- Encouraging open communication

Reasonable adjustments.

Adjustment:	When to use:	Example:
Flexible interview format	When a standard format may be a barrier	Offering video, phone, or in-person options
Extra time	When a candidate needs longer to process or respond	Extending interview or task time
Assistive technology	Where candidates use specific tools	Ensuring compatibility with screen readers
Alternative formats	When standard documents are not accessible	Providing materials in Word instead of PDF
Breaks during interviews	When fatigue or concentration is a factor	Scheduling small breaks in longer interviews
Support person	When additional support is needed	Allowing a candidate to attend with support
Questions in advance	When preparation improves accessibility	Sharing interview questions beforehand
Flexible application method	When forms may be a barrier	Accepting CVs, audio, or video applications

Reasonable adjustments are changes that remove or reduce barriers for disabled candidates. They help ensure that candidates are assessed fairly and can fully demonstrate their skills and experience. Adjustments look different for everyone – the most important thing is to be open, flexible, and led by the individual.

What to keep in mind:

- Adjustments should be considered at every stage of recruitment
- You do not need to have all the answers – asking is key
- Small changes can have a big impact
- Adjustments are about fairness, not advantage

Not sure what to offer?

The best approach is to ask.

“Is there anything we can do to support you through this process?”.

Accessible recruitment checklist (page 1 of 2).

Job advert:	Application process:	Communication:	Shortlisting:
☐ Written in plain English	☐ Candidates can apply using a CV or application form	☐ Instructions are clear and consistent	☐ Structured scoring criteria is used
☐ Avoids jargon and complex language	☐ Alternative formats are accepted (e.g. audio, video)	☐ Candidates can choose communication preferences	☐ All candidates are assessed consistently
☐ Essential and desirable criteria are clearly separated	☐ Contact option is provided for support	☐ Key information is shared in advance	☐ Focus is on skills and experience
☐ Salary or salary range included	☐ Online forms are accessible (screen reader compatible)	☐ Changes are communicated with notice	☐ No assumptions made about gaps in history
☐ Working pattern is clearly stated	☐ Forms can be completed using a keyboard	☐ Information is provided in accessible formats	
☐ Location (remote/hybrid/office) is clear	☐ Instructions are clear and easy to follow		
☐ Flexible working options are mentioned	☐ No unnecessary time limits are used		
☐ Inclusive and welcoming tone is used	☐ Candidates can save progress and return later		
☐ Accessibility statement is included	☐ Deadlines are clearly communicated		
☐ Role is not closed before the advertised deadline			

Accessible recruitment checklist (page 2 of 2).

Interviews:	Assessment tasks:	Offers and onboarding:	Reasonable adjustments:
☐ Adjustments are offered upfront	☐ Instructions are clear and simple	☐ Adjustments are discussed early	☐ Adjustments are offered at all stages
☐ Interview format is flexible (remote/ in-person)	☐ Tasks are relevant to the role	☐ Onboarding materials are accessible	☐ Candidates know how to request support
☐ Questions or topics are shared in advance (where possible)	☐ Timing is flexible or adjustable	☐ Systems are accessible from day one	☐ Approach is flexible and responsive
☐ Extra time is available if needed	☐ Accessible formats are provided	☐ Key information is shared in advance	☐ Adjustments are tailored to individual needs
☐ Tasks are accessible and relevant	☐ Alternative ways to complete tasks are considered	☐ Ongoing support is offered	

Top tip:

Accessible recruitment isn’t about being perfect – its about being open, flexible, and willing to improve.

Example accessibility statement.

Including an accessibility statement in your job adverts and recruitment materials helps set clear expectations and encourage candidates to request support. It shows that your organisation is open, inclusive, and proactive.

Ready to use example:

You can adapt the statement below for your organisation.

EXAMPLE:

We are committed to inclusive recruitment and welcome applications from disabled candidates. If you require any adjustments during the application or interview process, please contact us at [email]. We are happy to provide information in alternative formats and adapt our process where possible.

✓ Tips for using this:

- Include it in every job advert
- Make it easy to find (not hidden at the bottom)
- Always include a contact method
- Be prepared to respond and act on requests

A clear accessibility statement can be the difference between someone applying or not.

Common accessibility mistakes.

Even well-intentioned organisations can unintentionally create barriers. Being aware of common mistakes is the first step to improving your recruitment process.

Remember:

Most barriers are unintentional – but they can still have a real impact.

-  **Saying “let us know if you need adjustments” – but not explaining how**
✓ Always include clear contact details and next steps
-  **Using inaccessible PDFs or online systems**
✓ Use accessible formats and test your systems
-  **Setting rushed or unclear timelines**
✓ Allow enough time and communicate deadlines clearly
-  **Making assumptions about candidates**
✓ Focus on skills, not perceptions or gaps
-  **Relying on one format or process**
✓ Offer flexibility wherever possible
-  **Not providing information in advance**
✓ Share details early to support preparation
-  **Closing roles early**
✓ Stick to advertised deadlines to ensure fairness

Next step.

Creating accessible recruitment processes doesn't require perfection – just intention and action. Small, practical changes can make a significant difference in who feels able to apply and succeed.

What I offer:

If you'd like support reviewing or improving your recruitment practices, I offer:

- Accessibility audits
- Practical recommendations
- Training for teams

What accessible recruitment changes:

Most job adverts are written for people who don't need them explained twice. A candidate using a screen reader might hit a PDF that won't read out loud. Someone with dyslexia might drop off at a page of dense text with no headings. A candidate with limited mobility might never make it past a badly designed application form.

None of that is about ability. It's about design.

I've been on the other side of this. I know what it's like to want to apply for a role and hit a barrier before you've even started, one that has nothing to do with whether you can do the job.

Where most organisations lose good candidates:

- Job adverts that assume everyone reads the same way
- Application forms with no alternative format
- Interview processes with no flexibility built in
- Assessment tasks that test the wrong thing
- No clear route for someone to ask for an adjustment

Fix these and you're not just being fair. You're reaching people your competitors are turning away without knowing it.

If you want to know where your process is losing people, that's exactly what my Accessibility Audit is for.

**Built with lived experience
of sight loss to support
more inclusive and
accessible workplaces.**

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